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Community Corner

Midtown's Renwick Hotel To Be Converted Into Homeless Shelter

The historic hotel will be converted by December into a shelter for adult families, city representatives told a community board this week.



Nick Garber, Patch Staff

Posted Tue, Nov 17, 2020 at 12:17 pm ET • Updated Tue, Nov 17, 2020 at 3:17 pm ET

Replies (5)



The former Renwick Hotel at 118 East 40th St. will become an adult family shelter, open to 170 homeless families without minor children. The city aims to open the shelter by Dec. 15. (Google Maps)

MIDTOWN MANHATTAN, NY — A historic Midtown hotel will be converted into a shelter for unhoused families next month, representatives from the city and shelter providers told a neighborhood community board this week.

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The former Renwick Hotel at 118 East 40th St. will become an adult family shelter, open to 170 homeless families without minor children. The city aims to open the shelter by Dec. 15, representatives from the Department of Homeless Services said Monday during a Community Board 6 committee meeting.



Monday's presentation attracted intense interest, with more than 200 participants joining the meeting at one point. The Renwick shelter will be permanent, unlike the temporary hotel shelters that the city has created to reduce crowding during the pandemic, and which have set off an intense backlash in neighborhoods like the Upper West Side.

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Anticipating concerns by neighbors, presenters stressed that the shelter will be accompanied by a number of safety precautions, including 24/7 security, a dedicated phone line for community members to ask questions, and a "good neighbor policy" that each resident will be required to sign, prohibiting littering, loitering, playing loud music and other disruptive behavior.

Matthew Borden, an assistant commissioner for government affairs at DHS, said this type of shelter can fit in smoothly in any neighborhood, noting the widespread opposition to the city's plan to evict residents from the Harmonia, another adult family shelter on East 31st Street. (That plan was abandoned in September after weeks of pushback.)

"Adult family shelters are some of the proudest work that we do," Borden said.

The Renwick shelter will be operated by CORE Services Group, a nonprofit that runs dozens of shelters around the city.

The Renwick Hotel opened in 1920 and was once home to writers including F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Steinbeck, according to its website. It was most recently operated by Hilton, but stopped taking guests in March when the pandemic hit.

About 50 families have moved out of adult family shelters so far this year, presenters said, signaling progress in the city's efforts to help such families move into more permanent housing. As of July 2019, the city's overall shelter population stood at more than 58,000, including about 19,300 adults in families.

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D'Ann Lawrence White, Patch Staff

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Board members mostly expressed support for the new shelter, although one member, Andrew Gross, told DHS he was frustrated by a lack of communication and safety concerns surrounding a temporary shelter at the Vanderbilt YMCA on East 47th Street.

Responding to one neighbor's question about how best to welcome the incoming shelter residents, Gordon Jackson, CORE's vice president for community affairs, suggested smiling and waving hello.

"Just treat these clients the way you would treat your neighbors right now — with dignity," he said.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD SIX
211 EAST 43RD STREET, SUITE 1404
NEW YORK, NY 10017

Housing, Homeless, and Human Rights Committee
October 19, 2020
Via Zoom Webinar

Meeting Minutes

Present: Raj Nayar, Joan Beranbaum, Jeff Zellan, Matt Roberts, Anju Suresh, Abigail Krusemark, Claire Brennan, Rich Mintz, Carin van der Donk

Absent: Andrew Gross

Guests: See table of guests on pages 3-6

Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda/Previous Meeting's Minutes

Carin van der Donk called the meeting to order at 6:34PM.

Carin made a motion to adopt the agenda. Seeing no one opposed, the motion passed and the agenda was adopted.

Committee Business

1. Presentation by Manhattan Community Board 10 on their support for a permanent exhibit on the Exonerated Five in Central Park
 - a. Community Board 10 presented a resolution proposing a commemorative art piece for the Northeast section of Central Park To honor social justice reform and honor The Exonerated Five, formerly known as the Central Park Five, five Black and Latino teenagers from Harlem who were wrongfully convicted and prosecuted in 1989
 - b. The piece will serve to inform, engage, and activate the public in building a path to healing for Black and Latinx community
 - c. Desired takeaway: reflect on the human cost of racism and demonstrate that this is not an isolated incidence of injustice, but rather a systematic

problem. Will engage four key audience segments: local area residents, 42 million visitors, the media, and the youth

- d. Next steps: Community Board 10 will be presenting to Central Park Conservancy and NYC Parks, Public Design Commission, Office of the Mayor, Office of the Manhattan Borough President
- e. This will be done in conjunction with improvements slated for the Park

Vote on whether to propose a resolution in favor of the CB10 resolution for the permanent exhibition

VOTE: 9 In favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstain 0 Not entitled

2. Discussion on 421-a fraud and rent overcharges in Community District 6

- a. The 421-a program allows developers to get a tax break if they register their apartments for rent stabilization. There is a lot of fraud in the 421-a program as owners don't continue to register units as rent stabilized or they register the units with starting rents at higher than the cap. There's limited investigation or enforcement because the agencies that are in charge of enforcement are understaffed
- b. CB6 reached out to Housing Rights Initiative and they flagged two buildings in the Community Board that might be charging higher rent, above the rent caps: 212 East 40th St. with 372 units and 242 East 25th St. with 54 units
- c. Building was advertised with rent reductions, the net effective rent is based on the higher rent rather than the reduced rent
- d. Housing Rights Initiative is willing to provide legal support if we did some investigative research by reaching out to tenants to have them request their rental history. We can't prove anything unless tenants request their rental history and allow the HHHR committee to review the rental history. Joan Beranbaum and Rich Mintz has volunteered to facilitate outreach

Chair's Report

- 1. **Looking for donations** – Start collecting donations for the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Children's Center on 1st Ave and the Vanderbilt YMCA temporary shelter.
 - a. ACS center is looking for books (pre-K through young adult), suitcases and duffel bags are in demand
 - b. YMCA temporary shelter is looking for: books, puzzles, arts and craft

2. **Impending End of Eviction Moratorium** – evictions will be left up to the individual judges whether or not an individual can be evicted. Any cases from March can be picked up again (about 15,000 cases). **How as a committee can we assist?**
3. **New Family Shelter in CB6** between Lex and Park with 170 units that will be open at some point in December. CORE will be the service provider, providing security staff, case management, 24/7 open line to provide feedback, etc. These shelters provide supportive services for SUD and mental health services. Question was raised about metrics to track program deliverables

Old/New Business

1. **How can we help those facing evictions?** Brainstorm potential solutions or opportunities to support and circle back with Carin or Rich
2. **Resolution for Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA)** – this will be on the agenda for November, in support of Carlina Rivera's City Council bill to give community land trusts and non-profit affordable housing developer the right of first refusal, will help secure more affordable housing

Adjournment

Joan Beranbaum made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Abigail Krusemark and passed. Carin van der Donk declared the meeting adjourned at 7:44PM.

Minutes submitted by: Anju Suresh

Name	Affiliation
Cicely Harris	Chair of Manhattan Community Board 10
Karen Horry Parks	Committee Chair of Community Board 10
Rosie Mendez	Representative of Manhattan Borough President
Claude L. Winfield	Member, Manhattan Community Board Six
Molly Hollister	Chair, Manhattan Community Board Six
George Pitagorsky	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Donna LaPerla	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Kyle Athayde	Member, Manhattan Community Board Six
Brian Lafferty	Representative of Manhattan Borough President
Karen Perkins	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Vielcka Mansukhani	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Winnie Z	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Colleen Marocco	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6

John Morra	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Estelle Meister	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Karen Craddock	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Leyla Abedi	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Andie G	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Anne Cadel	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Gail Haft	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Audrey Felli	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Stephanie Hom	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Alex G	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Scott Kushner	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Chris Rizzo	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Melissa Sader	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Michelle Winfield	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Lauren Hom	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Kathleen Ritchie	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Mario Riva	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Robert Taylor	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Michelle Gieri	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Hideyo Hayami	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Evan Guttman	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Michaela Walsh	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Eric Bartels	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Annie Wells	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
T G	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Marissa Feinberg	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Gloria Zibaida	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Robert Loren	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Anne Fusaro	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Jonathan Feldman	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Odile De Candia	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Sabine Desrosier	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Ankur Doshi	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Michael Mellamphy	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Maryann Van Dongen	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
John Deyeso	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Mark Godsey	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6 (Outside CD 6)
Richard and Enid Katze	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Allison Furman	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Nancy Schwartz	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6

Renjie Luo	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
O K	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Nancy Kau	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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Brian Klokeid	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Alison Reemer	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Maggie Pritikin	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Christina Boris	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Michelle Babinsky	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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Beth Freeberg	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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Christopher Wells	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Arjun Viswanathan	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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Dolores Dembus Bittleman	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Des Dillon	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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Audrey Melkin	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Calvin Dong	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Brenda Colon	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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Susan Suffes	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
H Kelly	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Judith Estrine	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Susan Meyrowtiz	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
James Pero	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Dirk Van Dongen	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6 (Outside CD 6)
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Mendy Brannon	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Monisha Nariani	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6

Alfred Bradshaw	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Elaine David	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Matthew Jaslove	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Henry Weingarten	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Mary Aranas	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
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April Sandmeyer	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
John Donovan	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6

Gail Accardi	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Aidan Cahalane	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6
Carrie Fichtel	Resident of Manhattan Community District 6